

A Particular

(17)

CHURCH

O F

Christ's Institution

Described, &c.



By S. L. in a Letter to that Flock committed by the Lord to his Charge.

L O N D O N,

Printed for the Author in the year 1690.

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A Particular Church of Christ's Institution described, &c.

Beloved of the Lord,

IT hath been a long time on my heart, to write somewhat unto you, concerning the Nature of a *Particular Church of Divine Institution*, that, what I have done in my ordinary course of Preaching, being in short set together with as much plainness, as my weakness and designed brevity will admit, you may have an *Abstract* of those Truths on this Subject, in your Houses, which on divers occasions you have heard more largely, at least as to some Parts in the Church.

I will therefore in the first Place give you a *True Description of a Particular Church*, explain it, and by some *Arguments* prove the Described Church to be of *Divine Institution*, and it shall be my endeavour to make them so easy, that every one of you may see where their strength lyeth; tho some of them may not be so clear to all, yet others shall be such, as I hope, will be found strong by the meanest capacity amongst you.

To which I will add some Brief Intimations of those *Priviledges*, which those Church-members, who in the Integrity of their Hearts, devote themselves to God, are by reason of their Church-membership, Entitled unto, and Interested in. And in the close I will put you in Remembrance of those Obligations you lye under of Encouraging me in my work, by leading a more Holy and Heavenly Life and Conversation, giving you a *Direction* or two for your help herein. To the first, *What is a Particular Church of Divine Institution?*

Ans. A Particular Church of Divine Institution is a Society of *Visible Christians*, the members of which are united together for Communion in the same individual Acts of Worship, as Prayer, the Word, and Sacraments.

To Explicate this Description, Consider,

1. A Particular Church is a Society, not meerly an Assembly of People, meeting now and then on some Particular Accidental Occasions, but it is a *Fixed, Stated* thing, made up of such as are to assemble *Ordinarily*, and *Statedly* together, for some special Ends and Purposes.

2. It is a Society of *Visible Christians*, such as have on them the External, and Visible

sible Marks and Characters of Saving Grace, they must make such a Profession of so much as is credibly significant of the thing Professed, that in the Judgment of Charity they may be esteemed *sincere*; this part of the Description shews what is the proper matter of a Gospel Church, distinguishing it from the Societies of *Pagans, Mahometans, Jews, or other Leud Persons*, who manifestly discover themselves to be Enemies to the Lord Jesus Christ.

3. It is a *Society of Visible Christians united for Communion with God through Jesus Christ, and with one another in the Ordinances of Gospel worship to distinguish them from Civil Societies that unite for Civil Ends and Purposes.*

4. Their Communion is in the same Individual Acts of ~~Worship~~ Worship, and therefore must be *External, and Visible, Immediate, Local, and Personally present*. The Peoples consent for this kind of Communion is the *Formal Reason* of a Particular Church, distinguishing it from the *Catholick*, that hath an *Internal, Invisible, distant Communion, in the same kind of Worship only, and not in the same Individual Acts*. When Christians meet, and hear the same Sermon, joyn in the same Prayers, Participate of the same Sa-
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crament they hold Communion in the same Individual Acts of worship. But when they are *not* in the same place they hear only the same Doctrine for kind, and Joyn in the same Prayers for kind only, which those Christians may do, who live many thousand Miles distant from each other. They may be of the same Faith, own the same Sacraments, and the general Rules of Worship, but these cannot at one and the same time attend on the Ministry of one and the same Preacher, nor joyn in the same Individual Acts of Worship. To do thus much they must be in the *same place*.

This Part of the Description sets bounds and limits to a particular Church, shewing, that it can be compos'd of no more than are *capable* of Personal Presential Communion; or, of assembling in the same place for the holding Communion in the same particular acts of Worship. So many as can sit down under one and the same Ministers Administration, and join in the same Prayers, hear the same Word and actually participate of the Lords Supper in one place together, are as many as go to the fixing the utmost bounds of a Particular Church. All these *Conjunctly*; not any one of them *singly* and *apart*, go to the constituting a Particular

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lar Church ; and it is not every Society of men is a Church, meerly because they hear the Gospel Preached, nor only because the Sacraments are administred, nor because they have some Order : But because all these *Conjunctly* are found in the Society, therefore it is a Church. and it is a *Particular* Church, because this Society is made up only of so many as are capable of holding communion in the same acts of Worship, they are capable of meeting in one and the same place.

A company of visible Christians giving up themselves to God and by the Will of God to one another to hold Communion with each other in the same individual Acts of Worship, as aforesaid, is a Church, or Church Essential, as some call it, but it is not a *Polirical Body*, or an Organiz'd Church until it hath a *Bishop*, or *Pastor*, one or more solemnly by Fasting, and Prayer fixed over it. Tho

Chap. I. 20.

in the *Revelation*, the People as distinguished from the *Pastor*, represented by the *Candlesticks*, are called the *Church*, and the *Pastor*, represented by the Stars, the *Angel* of the *Church* ; and altho the Apostles are said to ordain Elders, or Pastors in every Church, and the Flock over which the

Holy Ghost made the Elders overseers, is called the *Church* of God purchased by his Blood, yet to make it a *Political Organized Body*, she must be a *Governing*, and a *Governed Part*, there must be Pastors and People to.

The great thing to be proved is, that a *Particular Church of Christs Institution*, consists of *visible Christians associated for Communion in the same Acts of Holy Worship*, and consequently must be no more than are capable of coming to worship in *one and the same place*; It is but one Congregation, one Assembly of Christians for Worship, or which is the same, a *Particular Gospel Church* is a *Congregational Church*. And it shall be my present endeavour to make it appear.

1. That if there be particular Churches, distinct from the Church Catholick, they must be *Congregational*.

2. That the Churches the first two or three hundred years after Christ were such.

3. That Protestants of most persuasions have granted it.

4. That such is the end of particular Churches, such the Duties of its members, such the nature of the Pastoral Office, as makes it clear, that they are *Congregational*.

5. That

5. That the Churches mentioned in the New Testament, which without doubt are agreeable to the Divine Institution, consisted of no more than could meet in one place.

Argument I.

That if there be Particular Churches distinct from the Church Catholick, they must be *Congregational*.

There are some who deny the Being of Particular Churches, as of distinct consideration from the Catholick, who, if they hold a *Church-Government* to be of Divine Appointment, must grant it Originally seated in the Catholick Church, that is, they must be of opinion, that the Catholick Church is made *one Governed Society, one Corporation, or Body Politick*, whence it unavoidably follows, that there must be a Governing, and a Governed part, and the power of the Governing Part, whether in Presbyters or Bishops, whether in a Colledg, or General Council of such, or in one single Person it is extended to the utmost bounds and limits of the Catholick Church, which in a word is the *Papal Power*, most justly oppugned, and unanswerably confuted by the Protestants,

as *Antichristian*, and *Destructive*, to the Power and Purity of Christs Religion.

What ever may be the practice of some good men, amongst Protestants, if there be any such who consider not the consequences of what they do, this my assertion hath the countenance of the most Learned and Pious Protestants in the world, and those very men, who by their practices, gave too much Reputation unto this Papal Power, when engaged in the controversie about the *supreme Governing Head of the Church*, have generously fallen in with the *Congregational Principle*. The Learned *Monsieur Claude* is a Remarkable Instance of the truth hereof.

I must therefore fix it as an established Principle amongst Protestants, that the Lord Jesus Christ hath instituted *Particular Churches*, distinct from the Catholick Church; yea, *Specifically* distinct; whence I proceed to my Argument, which is, that if *distinct*, they *must be Congregational*.

As the many different Societies that are in the world, are distinguished from each other by their several Specifying Ends, so by their specifying Ends, Ecclesiastical Societies are distinguished from those that are meerly Civil, and what is proper unto a Church specifying

specifying it from other Societies is its being a society for communion with God in and through Jesus Christ in Doctrine and Worship.

If therefore Particular Churches are specifically distinguished from the Catholick, and Communion is the specifying end of a Church, distinguishing it from Civil Societies, there must be different *kinds* of Communion to ground a different Species of Churches, that is, the Communion proper to Particular Churches must be specifically distinct from what is proper to the Catholick.

These things I presume, will be yielded me by every considering mind that makes any deep search into this matter. We must therefore consider what *that Communion is*, which is *proper* to the *Catholick Church*, and Specifically distinct from what is to be had in Particular Churches, which on diligent Enquiry will be found to be thus.

Catholick Communion, or that Communion which may be had by all the members of the Catholick Church lyeth in being of the same Faith, for the same Worship and the same Sacraments, and in having the same love for each other, this Internally; Externally by professing the same Faith,
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publickly owning the same Worship and Sacraments (that is, so much of these as is necessary to Salvation) and by Delegates and Letters Communicatory.

This sort of Communion may be had between those that are a thousand miles distant, and is only in the same *kind* of Worship, not in the same *Acts*.

The Communion that is Specifically distinct from this is a Communion that is *Immediate*, in the same *Individual Acts*. Here then lyeth the difference between the two sort of Communions. The one is extended to the utmost bounds of the Earth, (if any Christians be there,) it's had between those, that are distant, in the same kind of Worship only. The other stretched to the utmost limits of a Particular Church, yet immediate, Personal, and Present in the same Individual Acts of Worship amongst those that meet in the same Place.

If the Communion be no other than what can be had by those distant, and not in the same *Acts* of Worship, but only in the same kind, it is no other than what is Catholick.

We must therefore be for an Immediate Communion in the same Acts, which cannot be had by any, but those, who meet in the same Place. or content our selves with Catholick

tholick Communion. If we will have a further Communion than what is Catholick, it must be immediate and in the same Acts of Worship, that is, the Church in which this sort of Communion is to be had is *Congregational*.

The Communion must be either *Immediate* or *Distant*, it must be either in the same *Acts*, or only in the same *kind*; there is no possibility of assigning a third in this case. If immediate and in the same Acts, then it must be in a single Congregation, if distant and in the same kind of worship only, then Catholick, and not Particular.

Thus you see the Argument is Impregnable, if any Particular Churches distinct from the Catholick, they must be congregational.

Argument II.

That a Gospel Instituted Church is Congregational, made up of no more than can hold Communion, in the same Individual Acts of Worship, and so meet in one and the same place, hath been abundantly proved by those, who have, by uncontroulable *Authorities*, shewn, that there were no other Particular Churches, for the first 2 or 300 years after Christ.

That those Churches, which were in the
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World in the Apostles days, and after for so long a time, as I have already mentioned, are of Divine Institution, is not doubted by any that I know. All grant that the nearer we come to the Apostolical times, the nearer we approach to Gospel Purity, for which reason what party of Christians soever plead for *Divine Institution*, their recourse is unto the most *Antient Records*, what was in the *first times*.

The only thing in controversie here, is, whether the Christian Churches were in the beginning *Congregational*, and no more numerous, than to be able to meet in one and the same place.

For the Proof of the affirmative, that the first Churches were Congregational; I refer you to the Perusal of the Learned Writings of Dr. Owen, Mr. Baxter, and Mr. Clerkson, who have left no room for the least doubt.

Dr. Owen is, I confess, large, Mr. Clerkson is not so, which you may read at leisure, Mr. Baxter, to whom I am much indebted for the light I have in this subject, after he hath given us the Testimony of the Antients, supplyeth us with at least twenty or thirty considerations, to prove the Antiquity of Congregational Churches.

Thus

Thus from the very name given to the Temples, the Places, in which the Christians did meet to worship God, to wit, that of [*Churches*] the places of worship, the places where one Congregation only met; were antiently, and still are called *Churches*, and why? But because the *Congregation* was a *Church*, the name given the Temple, being derived from the People, who were the Church in the primary sense; for a Church in its first and proper notion is an Assembly, Convention, or Congregation. And the primitive sense of the word [*Parish*] as well as of the word [*Church*] signifieth as much, namely, a Church compos'd of the Vicinity, or Neighbourhood of Christians, which is as much as to say, a Parish Church consists only of as many as are able to come together, and Worship in one and the same place; Thus much is also cleared by the *Antient Agapa*, or love Feasts, when all the Church feasted together, that is, the Church were no more in number than could meet and feast in one place.

Besides, The Churches meeting together to choose, or Expressly consent to their own Bishop; That there were, (as Dr. *Hammond* confesses :) more Bishops and Churches than one in many Cities; That Antiquity
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made the parts of the Bishops Office, Teaching, Worshipping and Governing, to be of the same extent, and consequently had no more under their Government than they could teach; that in the first two Centuries, Bishops and Deacons were ever Officers in the same Church, and yet *Deacons* were never Officers more than in one single *Congregation*.

These, and many like Evidences, doth this Learned Divine in his most Excellent *Treatise of Episcopacy*, give to prove, That in the beginning of Christianity a Particular Gospel Church consisted of no more than could meet in one place.

Argument III.

As the Christian Churches in the most Primitive Times, were Congregational, in like manner, the Truth hereof is so very clear, that it hath obtained a full *Testimony* and *Witness*, in the Consciences of Learned Protestants of most persuasions, not only of the first *Reformers*, such as *Cranmer*, and the like, nor only of the *Old Nonconformists*, in the Days of Queen *Elizabeth*, and *James* the first. such as *Cartwright*, and his followers; But the *French* Protestants abroad give

give the same description of a Particular Church that is embraced by the Congregational. A *Particular Church* (say they) is a *Society of men, Professing the Christian Religion, declaring their Profession in hearing the same Sermons, participating of the same Sacraments together, and observing the same Orders and Rules for Government.* — The *Form of a particular Church, as such, lieth in this, that they have communion in the same Individual acts, and not in the same kind only, of worship.* And the Church of England, at home, in their *Articles* make the Church they describe but one Congregation for the worship of God, whereby their described Church can be found amongst none but the Congregational, to which the reverend Mr. Baxter adds the concessions of *Treat. Epif. p. 2. p. 16, 17.* Bishop Downam, Mr. Joseph Mede, Bilson, Grotius, Bishop Taylor, and Dr. Hammond.

Besides it must be observ'd, that those
B reverend

Ecclesia Particularis est societas hominum Christianam Religionem profitentium, quamque illam professionem Declarantium in auditione earundem Prædicationum veri Evangelii, &c.

Omnis Ecclesia Partic. quæ talis est, formam suam nanciscitur, ex eo quod qui eam constituent habent exercitia Christiana, non specie modo sed & numero una.

Thef. Silmur. de eccl. nom. p. 399. &c.

reverend Divines, amongst us in this Kingdom, who conform not to the Church of *England*, and are commonly called *Presbyterian*, are generally of the same mind. I am sure the greatest number of the most considerable, who go under this name in *London*, do hold particular Churches of Divine Institution to be of no larger extent than a single Congregation.

Thus much I the rather mention to prevent mistake, and that you may see I insist on nothing here, that interferes with my avowed *Healing* Principles. But to close this Argument, I only add, it is to be presumed, that it must be somewhat more than ordinary, that Influences the generality of Protestants, either to profess they hold particular Churches of Divine Institution to be congregational; or, at least to *yield*, that they were *such* in the most primitive times, even in the Apostles days, whereby my way is made the more clear to my remaining arguments. on which, as they are more immediately founded on Divine Revelation, I lay the greatest stress.

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Argument IV.

That such is the *End* of Particular Churches of Christs institution, such the *Duties* of its members, and such the *Nature* of the Pastoral Office, as makes it manifest, that they are Congregational.

That I may be the more convincing in what I offer on this Argument, I must beseech you to consider, that the God, and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ hath from all Eternity determined the Glorification of himself in the Salvation of a select number of fallen men: That to this *End* the Lord Jesus Christ died, Rose again, and sent the Holy Spirit, and instituted Particular Churches, in which he hath appointed such Offices, enjoined such Duties on the Members thereof, as are adjusted to the compassing this Great and Glorious Design and Purpose.

On the Lord Christs undertaking to assume our Nature, and in it to satisfy Divine Justice by his sufferings, and by his righteousness to Merit Eternal Life for the Elect, the Father promised the Lord Jesus, that he should have a seed, see the travel of his Soul and be satisfied; that he should be ex-

alted far above all Principality and Power, and Might, and Dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this World, but also in that which is to come. Yea, this Lord Christ is raised from the Dead, and is by the Father set on his right hand, and all things are put under his feet, and he made *Head* over all things to the *Church*, which considered *Mystically*, is made up of the *Elect*, or which is the same, the *Promised seed*, who by the mighty power of the Spirit are savingly converted and united unto Christ, in whom the whole Body (made up of them,) is fitly joyned together, and compacted by that, which every joynt supplyeth, according to the effectual working of every part. And that this great and high end may be obtained, the Lord Jesus, who ascended up on high, led Captivity Captive, and gave Gifts unto men. hath, as but now I intimated, instituted *Particular Churches*, in which he hath appointed *such Offices*. and on the members thereof enjoyned *such Duties*, (most exactly accommodated to the Great End of Gods Glory in the Elects Salvation) as cannot be done, or performed but in a Congregational Church. which, when proved, will furnish us with an Argument unanswerable, that the Churches

Churches of Christs Institution are Congregational.

I. I will begin with the *Duties* incumbent on the Members of the Church, not that I now design to insist on that *Right*, and *Power*, which belongs to a *Church Essential*, antecedent to its Organization; but confining my self to an organized Church, in which there is a *Pastor* and People, I will propose those Duties Incumbent on the members as in this Relation, and clear it unto you, that they are such as make it manifest, that the Church, of which, they, according to the Ordinance of God, are members, is Congregational.

1. They must assemble themselves together for Gods Publick Worship. This is expressly affirmed by the Apottle in *Heb.* 10. 25. who speaking to a particular Church, a *Spiritual House*, built by the Lord himself, *Heb.* 3. 6. tells them, that they must not forsake the *assembling* themselves together, but that 'twas their duty *Ordinarily* to come and wait on the Lord *together* in his ordinances; but how can this be, if they are more than can assemble and meet in one place.

2. they must attend on the Ministry of the same Pastor, acquaint themselves with

him, and submit to their Teachings and Admonitions. 1. *Thef.* 5. 12, 13. We beseech you Brethren, (The Apostle speaks to the Church at *Theffalonica* ch. 1. 1.) *know* them which labour among you, *acquaint* your selves with them, *esteem* them *richly* for their work sake, and respect their Admonitions, Imitate them in all that is well, considering the End of their Conversation, obey them and submit your selves to all their Gospel Instructions, *Heb.* 13. 7. 17. But how can the Church do all this, if they are more than can meet in one place? The exhortation is to a *Whole Church*, and to *every* member of it, and if the Church exceed the Bounds of a Congregation it cannot *together* discharge these Duties.

3. 'Tis the duty of the members of a Gospel Church to *Consider one another*, to have their eye on each other, to provoke unto love and good works, to *comfort* and *edifie* one another 1 *Thef.* 5. 11. *Heb.* 10. 24. ye to receive one another as Christ also received us *Rom.* 15. 7. to exhort one another daily whilst it is called to day, *Heb.* 3. 12, 13. Now these are duties that cannot be discharged but to a number capable of meeting in the same Place. If the number
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of the Church be so great as to make the performance of these Duties by the members impracticable, it must be acknowledged to go beyond the Limits set unto it by the Lord himself.

4. They must privately admonish an offending Brother, and if he will not hear, take two, or three more with him, if he will not hear them, tell it to the Church, *Mat. 18. 15.* But unless the Church be able to meet in *one place*, it is both impossible for him to make report unto the Church, or for the Church to speak to him and he to hear it.

Thus you see, the duties incumbent on Church members are such as plainly infer that they are suited to no Church but what is Congregational, nor is it possible for a whole Church of larger extent to perform them, and we know that the Goodness and Wisdom of God is such as gives us strong confidence he would never oblige his Children to Impossibilities.

II. The *Pastors* duty is such as makes it most evident, that the Church must not be of larger Extent than a congregation.

I. The Pastors of Particular Churches are obliged by the Holy Ghost to look after e-

very member in the Church, take heed to all the Flock, Feed the Church, *Acts* 20. 28. *Feed them with Knowledge and Understanding, Jer.* 3. 15. A Bishop or Pastor of a Particular Church, stands bound Ordinarily to Preach to the whole Church, which shews, that he is a *Fixed Officer* in the Church, which cannot be unless the members as such are also fixed in their Church Relation and obliged Ordinarily to attend in his Ministry, and the Flock no more than can do it. What he doth must be to

the *Edification* of them ; so *Paul* 1 *Cor.* 14. 4, 5. I would that ye all prophesied that the Church might receive *Edifying* ; the whole Church therefore must be together.

2. He must know all the Flock, even the State of every particular member, that he may the better divide the word aright, and give to every one his Portion in due season. Milk to babes, strong meat to those, that can bear it. And that thus much may

Mat. 24. 45.

2 *Tim.* 2. 15.

1 *Cor.* 3. 1. 2. &c.

H.b. 6. 11. &c.

be well done, their number must be no more than can be comprized within the compass of a Congregation. If the Congregation be larger, this work will be found

too great for him faithfully to discharge.

3. The *Administration* of the *Seals* of the *Covenant* is committed unto them. particularly that of the *Lords Supper*; and it must be here noted that when the whole Church cometh together to partake of the *Lords Body*, and *Blood*, the *Oneness* of the *Mystical Body* of *Christ* is most admirably represented, for a *Particular Church* of *Christ* is his *Body*. Thus much the *Apostle Paul* expressly asserts in his *Epistle* to the *Corinthians*, 1 Cor. 12. 27. where the whole he had spoken of the *Catholick Church* in the foregoing parts of the *Chapter*, is applied by him to the *Particular Church* at *Corinth*. Now ye, ye. [the *Church* at *Corinth*] are the *Body of Christ*, and *members in particular*, so that as in *Christ* all the Building the whole *Catholick Church* fitly framed together groweth unto an *Holy Temple* in the *Lord*, in like manner, ye, a *Particular Church* are in *Christ* builded together for an *Habitation* of *God* through the *Spirit*, and this *Particular Church* when at the *Ordinance* of the *Lords Supper* is a most lively Representation of the whole *Mystical Church*, the *Body* of *Christ*, which is *One*. The *Bread* which we break; is it not
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the Communion of the Body of Christ; the great Symbol or lively representation of it, For we being many are one Bread, and one Body, for we are all partakers of that one Bread; they bear the Image of the whole Church, as Grotius himself

1 Cor. 10. 16, 17. could observe on the place, for as in a particular Church many members are united in one, they meet in one place, and at the same time partake of that one Bread, so the Catholick Church, tho scattered, are united in one Lord Jesus; the whole particular Church meeting in a Body to partake of the one Bread, beareth the image of the whole Church, the whole Catholick Church, that unite in one Lord Jesus.

This is a great Mystery, a mystery much insisted on by the Holy Apostle, unanswerably inferring the necessity of a particular Churches confinement within the Pales of a congregation, for unless the whole particular Church could meet in one place for communion in the same Individual Acts of Worship, and so for the participating of that one Bread together, it could not according to the Apostles Doctrine be the Representation of the Communion of the whole body Catholick, where many are united

united in one, and therefore in the very next Chapter to put this Truth out of all doubt, the Apostle *1 Cor. 11. 20.* makes express mention of the Churches meeting to eat of the Lords Supper in *one place.*

4. 'Tis the pastors duty to *Rule* and *Govern* the Church, over which the Holy Ghost hath made him an overseer.

The very word that is in the *Acts* of the Apostles translated *Acts 20. 28.*

[*Feed*] is in *Mathew* rendred *Mat. 2. 6.*

[*Rule,*] out of thee shall come a Governor that shall *Rule* my People *Israel* ; The spiritual rule and government of a Pastor being a most effectual way, through the grace of God to feed the Flock, or Church over which he is placed.

This Rule is not by giving out Laws, enforced with *Corporal Mulcts*, and Punishments, but by an Authoritative *Declaration* of Christs Laws which are Sanctioned with the severest threatnings.

If a member of the Church liveth in gross sins, and after more private methods have been used, he still remains impenitent, the Pastor must in Christs name, with *all Authority*, admonish and reprove him, and if he continues hardened in such sins by
which

which he is *morally bound* over to the Judgment of God, the Pastor, in the Church, for the destruction of the Flesh, and saving his Soul in the day of the Lord, doth Judicially bind him to the same wrath, and what is bound in Earth shall be also bound in Heaven: on the other hand, with the same Authority, in like manner, those who manifest true Repentance are loosed and absolved.

But this being a great work and the last remedy, it must never be done without the greatest care and caution, and the Pastor, who in this case is as a *spiritual Chyrurgeon*, must not immediately on the bare report of others, proceed to cutting off. He must in the first place, consider the state of the sinner, discourse him personally, instruct, exhort, admonish, rebuke, and enquire diligently after the Impression these methods make on him, but these things cannot be done by any one Pastor, to more than are capable of meeting in one place, and therefore seeing this part of the Pastoral Office is extended to the utmost bounds of the Church, the Church must not exceed the limits of a Congregation, and whoever will seriously consider, how great the obligation is, that the Pastor lieth under, with re-
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spect to every particular Soul in the Church of which he is Pastor, how severely that charge is enforced, even with the guilt of the blood of the soul that perisheth through his neglect, may easily be induced to believe, that his obligation is not by the Infinitely Wise God, stretched beyond his capacity and power of performance, & yet they must watch over the Church, as those that must give an account and take heed that they be free from the Blood of all men.

Ezek. 3. 17. 19.

Acts 20. 27, 28.

Heb. 13. 17.

To sum up all under this Head, it must be observed that *Pastors of Christs making* do not only bear on them, *as sincere Christians* the Image of God, but as *Pastors they have on them the Image of Christ, the Lord Mediator*, vested with the Offices of *Prophet, Priest, and King*, on which account every *True Pastor*, in subserviency to the Lord Jesus Christ, is in his place, a *Teacher, High Priest, and Ruler* of the Church.

Gospel Pastors are Christs *Am-*
bassadors sent in his stead, to

2 Cor. 5. 19. 20.

Preach the Gospel of reconciliation, who in some sort bear on them the *Image* of the Mediator, and represent him to the Church, and are honoured with some of his *Titles*, for as Christ is the *Angel* of the Covenant,
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the *Great Prophet*, and *Bishop of our Souls*, the *Shepherd of the Flock*, so *Pastors* are called *Angels*, that come with a comfortable message about the *Covenant of Grace*, are *Bishops*, and *Shepherds*, yea, as *Christ* was the *great Teacher*, *Guide in Worship*, and *Ruler*, so in subordination to *Christ*, *Gospel Pastors* are *Teachers*, *Guides in Worship*, offering the spiritual *Sacrifices of Prayer & Praise unto God*, &

making Intercession for the People
 Jam. 4. 14. whence it is, that the *People* when sick, are directed to send to the *Elders* for their *Prayers* with promise, that when they make *Intercession*, *God* will heal the sick, and it's their work also to rule the *Church*.

For this reason it is, that *Faithful Pastors* are highly to be *Esteemed*, and why the *Lord* takes so much notice of all the wrongs done them, or contempt cast upon them, they bearing the *Image of the Lord Mediator*, on them. What is done unto them is interpreted by *Christ* himself, as done unto him; *He*

that heareth you, heareth me, and
 Luke 10. 16. *he that despiseth you, despiseth me;*

And on this Ground it is, that it's essential to every true *Pastor* to *Teach*, *Guide in Worship*, *make Intercession for*, and *Rule the Church*, to which he is sent, and the *Authority* and *Obligation* which he receives when he en-
 treth

treth on the Pastoral Office is as much to *teach*, and *guide in Worship*, as it is to Rule, and as much to Rule as it is to Teach and Guide in Worship.

Consider then, that as a Pastor he is a *stated* Teacher of a Particular Church, and it's known, his stated Teaching cannot be stretched further than to one Congregation. He may teach occasionally in many, but *statedly* he can be a teacher only to one, and from what hath been already urged, it unavoidably follows that his Governing and Ruling can be of no larger extent, for his *very Ruling* is only a more *Particular* and *Applicatory Teaching*.

In his *General Teaching*, he shews that the *Impenitent* are exposed to Gods wrath, but when there appear some *Impenitent sinners* to be in the Church, the Pastor, in the Exercise of his Ruling power, doth *particularly apply* this Truth to the *impenitent*, and *teach* both the *impenitent Sinner* and the Church, that he is under the wrath of God, incapable of Communion, requiring the Church to forbear communion and avoid him till he Repents.

Thus much may suffice to evince, that such is the *Nature* of the Pastors work, that it cannot be faithfully performed but in a Congregational Church. In

In a word, from what hath been now offered, it is very manifest that such is the nature of the peoples *Duty*, such the Pastoral Office, (which are most excellently adjusted to the Great End of Christ in instituting particular Churches) as makes it necessary for us to conclude that the Churches of Christs appointment are congregational.

Argument V.

That the Churches mentioned in the New Testament, which without doubt, are agreeable to the Divine Institution, consisted of no more than could meet in one place.

That the Apostles were divinely inspired, and that, in erecting Gospel Churches, they obeyed the Dictates of the Holy Ghost, cannot be denied by modest Professors of Christianity, if therefore on enquiry, we find all the Gospel Churches, recorded in the New Testament to be Congregational, such as could meet in one place, and that their meeting in one place is oft expressly insisted on by the Holy Spirit, there can be no room left for our making the least scruple against our believing their institution to be Divine.

The

The first Church, that was erected after Christs Ascension, and which may be taken for the pattern of all other Gospel Churches to be Formed and Framed by, was that at *Jerusalem*, which tho' large, yet not so large as to exceed the limits of one single Congregation, for the Holy Ghost assures us, that all those who believed in *Jerusalem* were together, and continued with one accord in the Temple. The whole Church in this City, consisting of all the Believers there were together, *ἅπας ὁτι τὸ αὐτὸ*, that is to say, they were in the same Place, for in many places in the Old Testament, particularly in *Judges 6. 33.* The seventy Interpreters, use these words to signify the same Place. The *Midianites*, and the *Amalekites* were gathered together in the Valley of *Fezrael*. *συνήχθησαν ὁτι τὸ αὐτὸ*, the same word here; in like manner our Translators in the first verse of the second of the *Acts* give the same sense, *they were all with one accord in one place, ὁτι τὸ αὐτὸ.* And in *Acts 4. 31, 32.* They [the whole Church,] were again assembled together [*συνήχθησαν* or] met in one Place for it's said that the place was shaken, the place [*ἐκεῖ*] the place, in which they were assembled together. And in *Acts 5. 12.* They were all, (*i. e.*) all the Church were assembled

C

bled together in *Solomons Porch*. And when their number encreased they still met together for it's said, the Apostles called the Multitude unto them, and spake to them, and the saying pleased the whole multitude, *Acts 6. 1. 3.* All which words concur to the assuring us, that the whole multitude was no greater than could meet in one place.

Some time after this *Paul*, being converted came to *Jerusalem* with certain of the Disciples of *Casarea*, and the Brethren said, the *Multitude*, [the Multitude of Believers, the whole Church] must needs come together. They must needs meet in one Place, whereby it is become very plain, that this first Church was but one Congregation, which sufficiently shews the Institution to be for Congregational Churches.

2. The Church at *Antioch*, in which place Christs Disciples were first called *Christians*, and which undoubtedly was form'd according to the Divine Institution, was composed of no more than could meet together in one place. Thus *Paul*, and *Barnabas* abiding a whole year in this City assembled themselves with the Church, *Acts 11. 26.* And a while after, the Apostle *Paul* coming again to this Place, they gathered

thered the Church together, and rehearsed unto the Church all that God had done with them, *Acts 14. 27.* Which could not be unless the Church met in one and the same place.

3. The Church at *Corinth*, to which *Paul* writes, was of no larger extent than a single Congregation, as appears clearly from the words of the Apostle, *1 Cor. 11.* Where he reproving them for some disorders, speaks of their Assemblies in such a manner as may easily move us to conclude, thus much; for in *v. 16.* He saith unto them, *Yee come together Συνηχασατε, [Ye meet in one Place]* but it is for the worse, for when ye come together in the Church, *v. 17.* There are divisions amongst you, and *v. 20.* it's said, when ye come together in one Place.

As a Church ought to do, they came together in one place, thereby shewing, they were no more than one congregation, but there being divisions amongst them, and they not staying one for another to eat of the Lords Supper, they came together for the worse, for which the Apostle rebukes them; and in pressing them to a reformation, he adviseth them to stay one for another that they might hold Communion with each other in the same Individual Acts of Worship.

Moreover in the first to the *Corinthians*, and the 14th Chapter, the Apostle speaking to the same *Church*, doth in v. 21. thus express himself *when ye come together*, and in v. 23. *If therefore the whole Church be come together* in one place.

4. The seven Churches in *Asia* were also congregational, for the Pastor of each Church is not only charged with the faults of the erring members, which shews that 'twas his duty to look more narrowly after every member, and that it was in his Power so to do but the Apostle, *Paul* in his Epistle to the *Colossians*, ch. 4. 16. Exhorts them to take care that the same Epistle sent them be read in the Church of the *Laodiceans*, which was one of the seven, which could not be, unless the whole Church met in one place, the like may be said of the other Churches; but we have already said enough to prove, that the first Churches were congregational, for, as has been already observed, if particular Churches are distinct from the *Catholick*, they must be Congregational; and that for the first 2 or 300 years they were such; that they were so in the Apostles days is confessed by Protestants of all persuasions, such is the design of Christ in Instituting Particular Churches, such the duties

duties incumbent on the members, such the Pastoral Office as evinceth the necessity thereof; in a word the Holy Scriptures proclaim the first erected Churches to be Congregational.

Take therefore these things into consideration, and I doubt not but they may contribute some-what to the settling and confirming you in this Truth.

WE will in the next place acquaint you with some of the *Priviledges*, you are interested in, as you are members of a *Church*, framed according to the Holy and Divine Institution, on which I the rather insist, because so many Professors regard them too little, and others, who seem to regard them, do not improve them as they should, and I must in the first Place lay down this Great Truth in the General;

That a truly Gracious Soul, joyning itself unto a Particular Church, formed agreeably to Christs Institution, and walking according to the Order of the Gospel, may have greater helps for the furtherance of his Salvation, choicer Opportunities for the obtaining Communion with God, and participating of Heavenly consolations, than any other where on Earth.

Such a Church is one of the *dwelling places* on *Mount Sion*, where the Lord delights to be, and where he maketh the most excellent displays of his Glory.

Heb. 12. 22,
23. *Mount Sion*, in Scripture (as I take it) represents unto us the *Catholick Church*; we are (saith

the Apostle) come unto *Mount Sion*, the *City of the Living God*, the *General Assembly and Church of the first-born*, and by the *Dwelling Places* on *Mount Sion* we must understand *Particular Gospel Churches*, the several *Assemblies* of his People meeting together according to the Order of Christ, in which the Glory of the Lord, is ordinarily more clearly seen than elsewhere this side Heaven, for in these Houses, or dwelling places, are the *Ordinances*, in which sound believers may behold the Beauty and Glory of the Lord, and from whence the Glorious Light of the Gospel Shines forth, and are therefore called a *Glory*.

Thus much seeming clear to me, let us consider what God hath promised unto these Churches, these dwelling places; consult we therefore that word, in *Isa. 4. 5, 6*. Where it's said, *The Lord will create upon every dwelling place of Mount Sion, even upon her*

her Assemblies, a Cloud, and smok by day, and the shining of a flaming Fire by night, that is, the same care which the Lord took of the Children of Israel in carrying them from Egypt unto the Land of Canaan, the same display he then made of his *Exod. 13. 21.*
 Power, Wisdom and Goodness

will he make, in caring for, and protecting these Churches, *for upon all the Glory shall be a defence, there shall be a Tabernacle for a shadow in the day time from the heat, and for a place of refuge and for a covert from Storm, and from Rain.*

Doth a Particular Believer stand in need of more Knowledge, and Instruction? doth he need help against Satans violent assaults, or doth he want supports in a time of distress, Chearings, Revivings and Comforts? Let him come into one of these dwelling places, and there he shall have it. For *Psal. 48. 3.*
 there it is that the Lord is known

for a Refuge; Mount Sion is the Joy of the whole Earth, for God is in her Palaces, in her High and Stately dwelling Places, *known* (i. e.) the Saints that dwell there experience, that the Lord is their Refuge, that there they have met with more of God than elsewhere they could.

Cant. 4. 12. A particular Church is as a Garden enclosed, a Spring shut up, a Fountain Sealed, where are choice fruits, and the water of life to be had. But you must get into this Garden, that you may eat of the fruits. Those who are without have not that special Advantage for their Souls, which these have who are within, and the sound believer can say with the Psalmist, I mean such as are Church members, *All my Springs are in thee; of Sion it shall be said, This* *Psal. 87. 7.* & that man was born in her, in thee are all my Springs, that is, in Sion, in the Church, for there the Lord himself, the Original and first Spring, the fountain of living waters is in a more eminent and special manner.

Psal. 92. 12, This is the House, in which
13. &c. the Righteous Flourish like the
 palm-tree, and grow like a Cedar
 in Lebanon. Note it well, this Promise is to those that be planted in the House of the Lord, even in the courts of our God; it's spoken of them, that they shall still bring forth fruit in old age, they shall be fat and flourishing, whose Graces are as Myrrh and Spice, yea, as the Mountains of Myrrh and Hills of Frankincense, amongst which the Lord delights to dwell.

This

This is the Lords *Treasury*, where graces are laid up in store for those, who in the way of Gods Ordinances draw near unto him. It is also the Lords *Armory*. where are the Spiritual weapons. of our Warfare, mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds, casting down Imaginations, and every high thing, that exalteth itself against God. Here it is, that the Gracious Soul, tossed to and fro with various and violent temptations, vexed with Strong, and Grievous lusts, sometime Pride and Passion, again with earthly and sinful Imaginations, then with unbelief and blasphemous thoughts, here I say, after it hath used much means it cometh, and hath found the Lord Gracious, in giving Victory over obstinate lusts and powerful corruptions. 2 Cor. 10.
4, 5.

A particular Church is the Lord Christs *Nursery*, in which are many children, some weak, and other strong, some sick and out of humour, peevish, & quarrellsome, not pleased with the Heavenly manna, tho of the Lords sending, and angry with their Pastor, the Nurse many a time but O, the care the Lord takes of every Child! O, the excellency of his grace, and the greatness of his compassions towards them, in that
he

he hath made it the duty of Pastors to cherish these Children, as a Nurse, to bear with their weakness, and patiently endure their anger, that he may heal their distempers, and make them strong in the Lord. We were gentle among you, even as a Nurse cher-

isheth her Children, so being
 1 *Tos.* 2. 7. affectionately desirous of you, we
 8. 11. were willing to have imparted un-

to you, not only the Gospel of God, but also our own souls, because ye were dear unto us. You know how we exhorted, and comforted, and charged every one of you, (mind it) as a Father doth his children, that ye would walk worthy of God.

It is marvelous to consider what love the Lord infuses into the souls of faithful Pastors, to every member of their Flocks. The Lord hath not only made it the Duty of all, but the Practice of some, who can say, that every Member of their Flock is dear unto them, and that they will very gladly spend, and be spent for them: Yea thus much they will hold on
 2 *Cor.* 12. 15. to do, tho' the more abundantly they love them, the less they be loved.

O what a Priviledge have those who are under the care of such Pastors, and in such

such a *Nursery*? Are they in distress? Are they tempted? Do they hunger and thirst? They may come to the Ordinances administered here, and *suck*, and be satisfied with the *Breasts* of her Consolation; they may suck out and be delighted with the abundance of her glory:

Ye shall *suck*, ye shall be *Isa 66. 11, 12, 13.* born upon her sides, and be dandled upon her knees; as one whom his Mother comforteth, so will I comfort you, and ye shall be comforted, saith the Lord.

In this house we may have the clearest views of a *Bleeding Lord Jesus*, the highest instance of divine love; here may we look on him, whom we have pierced, and mourn. Here we renew our covenant and sit down at the Lords Table, and feast, not only *with*, but *on* our Lord; who saith, Come, eat of *my* Bread, and drink of the Wine, which I have mingled; and here may we meet with grace, mortifying our lusts, strengthening our Faith, and Love, and Hope &c. yea here it is that the Lord vouchsafes pardoning mercy, and frequently gives to his children the seal of their pardon, *Soul-nourishing evidences* of their interest in him, of their being Justified, Adopted. and such as shall be saved by him. When I reflect

reflect on what the Holy Ghost in Scripture has spoken of these things, and what I have heard many of the Godly speak of their experiences concerning them, and also consider what, sometimes I my self, blessed be the Lord, have *felt*, I cannot but wish that others would turn in *hither*, and taste and see how gracious the Lord is, and cannot but be afflicted for those, who, I hope, are sincere, yet through one mistake or another neglect the giving up themselves to follow the Lord *fully*, and know nothing experimentally what it is to dwell in the House of the Lord.

But how greatly are those, who are Members of a Church to be pitied, who seem careless about this great work, not minding whether they come to Church-Ordinances or not! Verily, it argues great *weakness* of Grace, if not *unsoundness* of *Heart*. O! that you would therefore take heed how you slight, or neglect such great Priviledges, as these are; but be perswaded to fix these things on your hearts.

1. You are, by the good Providence of God, made Members of a Particular Church of Christ, framed according to the Holy Institution.

2. You are hereby made Partakers of
Great

Great *Priviledges* ; you have great Helps and means afforded you for the doing the things the Lord God by his Word and Providences is now calling us unto. But

3. There are some more particular Circumstances attending us, which shew our obligation to be more than ordinary. For,

1. The Lord God built unto himself a House amongst us, in an Evil time. Immediately on my coming amongst you, we were providentially cast in a place, where nothing but much trouble was in prospect, notwithstanding which, the Lord gave us Rest, and blessed our Endeavours. The Word was successful, and many brought to the knowledge of himself, and in little more than two years time, through the Infinitely Free Grace of God, 'with the concurring Approbation of several Reverend Ministers of this City, I was by fasting and prayer, solemnly set apart to the Office of a Pastor amongst you,

2. Tho we were (both the People and my self,) very young, temptations many and strong, the day very dark and sorrowful, yet the Lord was with us, he encreased our number, and gave us time to take root before the Persecution began, yea, the Lord God stirred up the Elders of other Churches

Churches to write unto us, in such a Grave, Pious and affectionate manner, as influenced us to set a day apart for solemn Fasting and Prayer, at which time we renewed our Covenant with God, and entred into a solemn Promise to do our utmost to keep our selves free from the abominations of the times.

3. When tribulation came on, and we were singled out from amongst our Brethren, to be made the *Butt* of the rage of some ill men, the Lord our God for some months kept us still together in our publick work; and when I was driven from you, the Lord took care of you, you had your Meetings, tho more privately, yet not so private but still the greater part of you met together, for a long time in peace, even when others were broken up and exposed to very great and perplexing troubles. This was a signal Instance of the care of God over you, that must never be forgotten.

4. The circumstances with which my troubles were cloth'd, being most *amazing*, your souls were even overwhelmed with sorrow, you were under a tormenting despair, as to my return amongst you; You were bowed down greatly, at which time some of you in the anguish and bitterness of
your

your souls, cryed unto the Lord, your prayers were fervent, and I trust in Faith. Then you reflected on the several exhortations, and Admonitions given you, and also on your many neglects, you bewailed them, and mourned over them, and if at any time you could *hope above hope*, how many were your Resolutions, your Promises and Vows of living More unto God, would the Lord but make bare his Arm, clear my innocency, and return me unto you.

All these things the Lord hath done, He glorified his grace infinitely in preserving, supporting and comforting, and at last in restoring me unto you, and what should be an heart breaking consideration unto us in this, we are not *Reformed*, *our vows we have not payed*, *our Promises we have not fulfilled*, we are undoubtedly a people that have provoked God, and if we expect or hope for his turning to us in a way of mercy, it must be our labour to be found lying low before the Lord, we must think on our past vows to pay them. And will you hearken to the Voice of God, and in his strength resolve on an endeavour of living more unto his promise, and the glory of his great name? The storm in which we have been was great,
the

the Winds did blow, the Rain descended, and did beat vehemently upon us, and yet through the grace of God we can say, *we are not consumed, we still remain a Church, an House for our Lord to dwell in*; and shall not the Grace of God so far affect us as to lead us unto Repentance?

I confess it's matter of great comfort unto me, that in the midst of violent shakings we were not utterly broken, our Church state was not dissolved, and I am sure our obligation to God is on this account the greater, and I think I may modestly enough tell you, that such hath been my carriage amongst you, that I may challenge your hearty endeavours of living more truly to God as *my Due*. Above a year and half ago; I gave you my reasons in a Letter, why I might do so, and your answer contains an acknowledgment of it. A part of which for the more effectual moving you to the work of the day, and that every *Member* may have the perusal thereof, I will transcribe, with your answer thereunto.

My Letter to you.

“ **A**S it is the Duty of every Gospel
 “ Pastor, so it will be the practice
 “ of those, that are faithful to do their ut-
 “ termost for the real profit, and Spiritual
 “ Consolation

" Consolation of every one committed to
 " their charge. It having therefore pleas-
 " ed the Lord to make me your *Pastor*, how
 " can I be faithful; Unless I declare unto
 " you the whole Counsel of God, and use
 " all proper methods for the enlightning you
 " concerning your Duty in every Relation?
 " And altho' the Lord enables me with In-
 " tegrity to discharge my Duty, how can
 " you receive the desired advantage, except
 " you diligently attend unto your *Pastors*
 " Councils that are manifestly Conformed
 " to the holy Scriptures?

" That I may do my part in this Particular,
 " my present business shall be to put you in
 " Remembrance, of what you promised on my
 " closing with your Call, and to beseech you
 " to consider, how I have demeaned my self
 " amongst you ever since, and what Obliga-
 " tions you lie under, to give me *encourage-*
 " *ments* in my work, by a *sincere endeavour to*
 " *live more to the Praise and Glory of the Lord.*

1. " In the first place then, my Request
 " unto you is, That you will reflect on this;
 " How that when you gave me a Call to
 " take the Pastoral care of you, you were
 " but few, and such as were low in the
 " World, not able to do any thing consi-
 " derable, towards the maintenance of Me

D

" and

and my Family, notwithstanding which,
 I being apprehensive I might be the more
 Useful amongst you, if in *such Circumstan-*
ces, I clos'd with your Call, I told you that
 seeing 'twas apparent, that nothing could be
 a *motive* to engage me to grant your de-
 sire, but the *hopes of glorifying God, in fur-*
thering your Salvation, I expected you
 should (on my taking the Pastoral over-
 sight of you) do what in you lay to give
 me incouragement by taking special care
 to excel in a humble, holy Conversation;
 And thus much in the presence of a heart-
 searching God *you solemnly promised me.*

2. "That ever since I have been your Pastor,
 I have as the Lord enabled me, made it my
 work, in publick, & more privately by Ca-
 techizing, & Personal discourse to acquaint
 you with the substantial Doctrines of the
 Gospel, with the Nature of an Instituted
 Church, with the Form of the House and Fa-
 shion thereof, with the Goings out, & Com-
 ings in thereof, with all the Ordinances &
 Laws thereof, I did not thin to declare unto
 you, *that way* of Worship, which I am con-
 vinc'd is most acceptable unto God; Nor
 did I cease to warn you to abide faithful in
 your adhearance unto it, what sufferings so-
 ever you might on that account be expof-
 ed

"ed unto; And how great soever my wants
 "were, how much soever I was at any time
 "in that respect distress'd I never press'd you
 "to do any thing for my supply, or to sub-
 "scribe what you would do, but only insist-
 "ed on your *endeavour to live more holily, and*
 "*more spiritually, as the great encouragement you*
 "*were bound to give me.*

3. " When the Persecution was approach-
 "ing, you know how much I warn'd you
 "to take *heed, lest you did fall*, and what care I
 "took for the establishment of every one in
 "the Truth, and what I did for the Reform-
 "ing those, that walk'd disorderly, and for the
 "prevention of disorders in others, by im-
 "portuning some of the Brethren to give
 "me their help, appointing some time eve-
 "ry week to spend in Prayer and in Con-
 "sultations, how to further the edification
 "of every particular member. And

4. " When the Persecution brake in upon
 "us, you cannot forget how the Lord
 "strengthened me with readiness and chear-
 "fulness to endure all things for your sakes,
 "the many convictions they recorded against
 "me, the many Warrants sent out to take
 "me, their breaking open my house, their
 "running with a naked Sword at my Wife,
 "their keeping possession of my House se-
 "veral Nights and Days, their spoiling me

"of my Goods, their reproaching me in
 "their publick Prints, discouraged me not,
 "but the Lord was still gracious: For altho'
 "I durst not return to my Family, from
 "which they had driven me, yet I always
 "ventured to go to the *Meeting-House*, where
 "I continued to publish the Gospel of our
 "Lord unto you, and thus much I did, not-
 "withstanding, I knew that they did use
 "all imaginable Art to seize me, either in
 "my going unto or coming from that place,
 "Moreover I did somewhat considerable, to
 "make the burden of your sufferings the
 "more easy unto you.

5. "When I was singled out from a-
 "mongst my Brethren, and expos'd unto
 "the Odium and Contempt of all men, my
 "Name in the *Declaration*, and my Person
 "described in the *Gazet*, Put into their Bal-
 "lads, whereby I was made the song of the
 "Drunkard, and burnt in *Effgie*, prosecut-
 "ed on the 35th of *Eliz.* which ends in
 "Death or Banishment, run to three Out-
 "lawries for my Nonconformity, severely
 "pursued by my Enemies, left and forsak-
 "en of my Friends, frequently destitute of
 "a place where to lay my Head, yet even
 "then my Heart was towards you, I frequent-
 "ly writ unto you, praying you to give me
 "an

"an Account of your state, And al-
 "tho' for some Months I could neither see
 "any of you, nor receive one Letter yet
 "I continued to express my love to your
 "Souls, by sending Letter after Letter, un-
 "til I had prevail'd with some of you to vi-
 "sit and discourse me, and then those who
 "came unto me, knew how I did bear you
 "on my Heart, and how I longed to be ser-
 "viceable to the Lord *amongst you*, and when
 "my circumstances were such, that I could
 "not Preach unto you, yet then I ventur'd
 "to have personal discourse with as many as
 "had the courage to see me, and as soon as
 "we could get convenient places, I preach'd
 "to as many as would venture to hear me,
 "and at last when the Lord remov'd your
 "Fears you knew, that tho' I carried my life in
 "my hand, yet I declined not to meet the
 "whole Church, and two Winters (before
 "my Deliverance,) I met the whole Con-
 "gregation frequently together, Preach'd
 "unto you, & once a Month administred the
 "Lords Supper, at which time we dealt
 "with those that walked disorderly, and re-
 "ceived others into our Communion, and
 "through the infinite mercy of a gracious
 "Lord, my endeavours were bless'd to the
 "the Reforming many. Furthermore you

" cannot but remember that when other
 " Congregations were scattered and greatly
 " broken, because of the Persecution, and
 " when 'twas generally apprehended, that I
 " durst not continue in the Kingdom, yet
 " tho' I had great temptations to go abroad
 " into another Country, where I might have
 " opportunity to work, I could not leave you,
 " but blessed be the Lord, had many a
 " time refreshing Consolations from Hea-
 " ven in being with you, and had the op-
 " portunity as well as occasion from my
 " own *Experience*, to assure you that *the Joys,*
 " *which attend great sufferings for keeping a good*
 " *Conscience, are of more value than the whole*
 " *World.* And you cannot forget what a
 " *Presence of God* was with us at that time,
 " And

6. " As soon as the Lord was pleas'd to
 " deliver me out of my great troubles, and
 " to hear Prayer in clearing my Integrity,
 " for the last result was, *no one Man had on*
 " *Oath accused me of what could be made so*
 " *much as a Misdemeanor,* nothing in the
 " *Crown Office,* but three Out-lawries for my
 " Nonconformity against me ; I say, that
 " as soon as I was delivered, I applied my
 " self to a more constant exercise of my
 " Pastoral Function amongst you, and took
 " some

“some care, tho’ I must confess after a
 “very weak, and feeble manner, to do what
 “was for the profit, comfort and reasonable
 “satisfaction of all.

“The Truth of these things, you all know,
 “and having said so much to refresh your
 “Memories, I must beseech you to consider,
 “whether on a due weighing all circumstances
 “I may not justly expect, that by a sincere en-
 “deavour, to live more to the Honour and Glo-
 “ry of the Lord Jesus Christ, you encourage me
 “in my Ministerial work. The hopes of be-
 “ing thus encouraged mov’d me to close
 “with your Call, and the same hopes have
 “still hardned me against those Temptations
 “I have met with to take me from you; and
 “I can with much sincerity, declare, that
 “tho’ you never could, as yet provide a com-
 “petency for me, nor are like to do it,
 “that I can see, yet may I behold you all
 “as so many Plants flourishing in the Courts
 “of our God, may I but see you flourishing
 “like the Palm Trees, and growing like a Ce-
 “dar in Lebanon, ’twould more rejoyce my
 “Soul, than if I had been possessed with all
 “the Treasures of this World; it is you, and
 “not yours I seek, and through the mercy
 “of our Lord, I can truly say, that no-
 “thing would delight me more, than

"to observe you to walk so, that I might
 "with the Apostle, cry out, *O what is our*
 "*Hope, or Joy, or Crown of Rejoycing? Are*
 "*not even ye in the Presence of our Lord Jesus*
 "*Christ at his coming? Ye are our Glory and*
 "Joy.

"In a word, weighing all these circum-
 "stances, I must say it, that I think that I
 "may very Justly expect your encourage-
 "ment, by leading a Life more to the Ho-
 "nour and Glory of God.

"And thus much I do expect, and there-
 "fore must and do charge you in the *Name*
 "*of the Lord Christ* to rouse up your selves,
 "and pay your vows to God, and labour,
 "that you may be found to walk answerable
 "to the obligations you lye under.
 "God has done more for you than for
 "many others; and therefore expects the
 "more from you. The things I would
 "more particularly inculcate on you, are,

1. "That you conscientiously consider the
 "Duties incumbent on you, as you are members
 "of that Church, over which the Holy Ghost,
 "has made me an overseer, and to that end
 "cherish love to one another. I find that no-
 "thing so effectually moves me to deal
 "faithfully with you as my Love unto you,
 "and untill you love one another better,
 "you

"you will never be found so faithful, as
 "you should be to each other. Love
 "will oblige you to conceal the faults of a
 "Brother from the multitude, and provoke
 "you to tell it him in private. Love will
 "sweeten all the counsels and reprochs, and
 "open your hearts to receive a faithful
 "admonition, you will hearken to those
 "you love. Love therefore one another
 "more and more ; provoke one another
 "to love, and good works, and let your
 "works be expressive of your love to God
 "and to me, and to one another. That is the
 "First thing. The second is,

2. "That you make conscience of the
 "great duty of *Assembling your selves together*.
 "Come out to every Church meeting. You
 "know that such meetings are not frequent
 "with us, and that therefore you ought the
 "rather to come unto them. It has been
 "my care to instruct you in the great and
 "most necessary truths of the Gospel, and
 "whereas for the time ye ought to have
 "been *Teachers* of others, ye have need
 "that one teach you again, which be the
 "first principles of the Oracles of God ; but
 "how comes this to pass ? Verily when I
 "reflect on your past practice, 'twas thus,
 "tho I laboured with the greatest plainness
 "to

“ to instruct you, not one third part of the
 “ Church would be present.

“ And whereas I hoped you would after
 “ the late tribulation be more watchful
 “ and diligent, yet you are rather more
 “ careless, whereby it appears plainly to
 “ me, that 'twill be a vain thing for me to
 “ endeavour your instruction, unless you re-
 “ solve a reformation.

“ It is not enough to attend on my mi-
 “ nistry Lords days, but at other times,
 “ when I call you together on purpose to
 “ enlighten you concerning the most mo-
 “ mentous Doctrines of Religion. I beseech
 “ you therefore to make conscience of at-
 “ tending on those Meetings that are on
 “ the week days: neglect them not as you
 “ did some years ago, and grieve me not
 “ *now* as you did then. You cannot but re-
 “ member how you then afflicted me, how
 “ that 'twas so very much, that unless the Lord
 “ had supported me by giving in a continu-
 “ ed seal unto my ministry, otherwise I
 “ could never have lived under it. It's true
 “ the Lord is pleased at this very time to
 “ vouchsafe unto me great comforts from
 “ the success I have in convincing, and I
 “ hope, converting many, but the great de-
 “ sire of my soul is that I may be also owned
 “ in furthering your edification. 3.

3. "Be prevailed with to *visit one another*
 "oft, and then let your conversation be
 "heavenly and spiritual. One great part
 "of the help and comfort that Church
 "Members should afford each other is this
 "way, (*viz.*) by being acquainted with
 "each other, by being oft in praying and
 "in discoursing about Heavenly matters to-
 "gether.

"These are the things I insist on & expect
 "some further *assurances* from you, than
 "yet you have given me, that you will be
 "faithful in their observance, and therefore
 "my advice is, that the whole Church meet
 "together, and let this Letter be read a-
 "mongst you, and after serious seeking
 "God, draw up your result and let me in
 "a letter have it sent me, I am, &c.

When you received this the Church
 met, spent some time in prayer, it was read
 and the following answer returned unto
 me to my great and unexpressible comfort.

Reverend Sir.

"According to your desire and appoint-
 "ment the Church met this day, and
 "according to your direction mentioned in
 "the letter you sent, after solemn seeking
 "of God, it was read over and hearkened
 "unto

"unto with great attention, and we look
 "upon our selves after consideration there-
 "of, obliged to bless God for the good
 "counsels you give us therein, and also to
 "be thankful unto you for that great con-
 "cernedness, we are apprehensive, you have
 "in you for our spiritual good, and eternal
 "Salvation ; which we believe is an effect
 "of your sincere love to us, and of the de-
 "fire of bringing glory to God. We do all
 "own (we hope with some griefs of heart)
 "that we have been guilty of many sins and
 "neglect of duty, both Personal and Rela-
 "tional, and more particularly of those du-
 "ties, which are and have been incumbent on
 "us as Church members, in every particu-
 "lar, wherewith you have in your letter
 "charged us, and we desire to take the
 "shame of it to our selves, and to Judge
 "our selves for it in the presence of God, as
 "we hope we have done. since we met
 "together this day ; and we began interest
 "in your prayers, that God would make
 "those convictions, that your letter hath
 "given us, effectual for a future reformati-
 "on. And as for the *Counsels* you give us,
 "and the *Motives* you press us by to the
 "performance of them, we do very well
 "approve of them and do solemnly as in the
 "presence

" *presence of God* promise to put them in
 " practice, viz. to attend upon those week-
 " day Church meetings, we shall by the
 " good providence of God for the future en-
 " joy, with more frequency than formerly,
 " and shall make conscience of stirring up
 " one another to love and good works,
 " and be frequent in exhorting and praying
 " one with another. And we heartily beg
 " an interest in your prayers, that in the
 " strength of Christ we may perform what
 " we *so solemnly promise here in.* May 24. 1688.

This solemn Promise which you have in
 Christs strength entred into is known to
 the Lord, who expects your performance,
 and the rather, seeing very lately you have
 renewed it, and we may safely say that from
 the success the Lord hath given to our en-
 deavours, our encouragement, to this work
 is great. Have not our exhortations given
 some of the Society. and our Prayers to the
 Lord on their behalf. been owned of God ?
 Why then shall we not be engaged to la-
 bour in so Pious and Honest a Design ? To
 convert a sinner from the error of his way
 and cover a multitude of sins, to be instru-
 mental in furthering the Salvation of each
 other, are works both pleasing unto God,
 and profitable to our own Souls, I beseech
 you

you therefore that you would make conscience of this your solemn Promise, to which I will add these following requests.

1. *That you will conscientiously enquire after those amongst us, who walk not so orderly as could be wished.* Are there any, that neglect Family Worship, are there any who are not so careful of their Conversations, as they ought to be, are there any you observe overtaken in any other Fault, do you, who are spiritual endeavour to restore such a one with the Spirit of meekness? To this end consider, (1.) How corrupt thy own heart is, how much thou art owing to the restraining grace of God, if thou hast not fallen into the same, or a like Iniquity. (2.) Make a diligent search into thy own soul after thy own sins, see whether there be not a *Beam* in thy own Eye, and be sure in the first place to cast that out. (3.) Possess thy Soul with a due sense of thy Duty to do thy utmost for thy Brothers recovery, consider the Evil in sin, how much against God, Christ, the Holy Spirit, and his own Soul. (4.) Go aside in secret, cry to God for Wisdom, meekness, and strong affection, that thou maist so rebuke thy Brother as to gain him. (5.)
When

When thou art discoursing with him labour to convince him that thou designest nothing but the glory of God and the good of his Soul. (6.) Use the most plain, and convincing Arguments, to the end thou may'st bring him to a sense of his sin, and (7.) Follow thy Exhortations with Prayer, and thy Prayer with further Exhortations. (8.) Be not Impatient, but consider how long the Lord waiteth to be gracious unto us, and that therefore we ought much longer to wait on others,

2. When you are met to Pray one with another, (as you have Promised) endeavour to get your Hearts affected with the crying abominations of the Times, and Places in which we live. If ever, this is the time, wherein the Godly should *Sigh* and *Cry*, and also Pray for the pouring forth a Spirit of grace and supplication, and mourning upon the whole Land.

3. Labour hard to carry on Reformation, work on your own selves and family, and press on all your acquaintance, the minding the special duty of the day, *viz.* the great *work of Reformation*.

4. Consider that Faithfulness in the discharge of those Duties incumbent on us, as *Church members*, will greatly help towards
the

the carrying on Humiliation, and Reformation-work. I beseech you therefore for the Lords sake, to remember that as it is your mercy to be members of a Church of Christs Institution, where such glorious privileges are to be had by the sincere, so the Obligation you in special lie under to prize and improve them, for the furtherance of this great work is strong and powerful; and lest you should still be too secure, get these words of the Lord engraven on your Hearts. *Go ye now unto my place, which was in Shiloh, where I set my Name at the first, and see what I did to it, for the wickedness of my People Israel, now because ye have done all these works, saith the Lord, and I spake unto you rising up Early, and speaking, but ye heard not, and I called you, but ye answered not, therefore will I do unto this House, which is called by my Name, as I have done to Shiloh. Fix it I say on your Souls, and as you desire to escape Shilohs Plagues, beware of Shilohs Sins. Hereafter, if God will, I hope to be more particular in speaking to some special cases relating to Church matters.* Decemb. 16. 1689.

E R R A T A.

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